RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE
UC ACADEMIC SENATE – UC OFFICE OF RESEARCH
MULTICAMPUS RESEARCH UNIT (MRU) JOINT WORKGROUP

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Background

The term Multicampus Research Unit (MRU), as used within the University of California community, has developed many meanings. The term MRU is formally defined in the Compendium as “MRU (Multicampus Research Unit): This category includes (1) all units with facilities and personnel on two or more campuses or locations associated with them, and (2) all units with facilities at a single location on or near one of the campuses if the participation of faculty or staff from other campuses is so extensive as to give such a unit a Universitywide character”.

For ease of reference, the Workgroup defines MRUs as the full set of multicampus research programs, grants and facilities, independent of their levels of UC Office of Research support, that has a formal reporting relationship to the UC Office of Research. The Office of Research has coordinated five- and fifteen-year MRU reviews as set forth in the Compendium: “The Five-Year Review report is submitted to the Vice Provost for Research, who distributes it to the Academic Vice Chancellors for campus comment and the Chair of the Academic Council for comment by UCORP, UCPB, and CCGA”.

The University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) formed a subcommittee on MRU Funding in 2000 and its recommendations (Appendix A) are available at http://www.ucop.edu/research/meetings/mru_joint_workgroup.html. The Academic Council, in 2004, endorsed the report “Restructuring the MRU Review Process” prepared by the University Committee on Planning and Budget (UCPB) (see Appendix B on website). The current Workgroup is a continuation of these efforts to increase the flexibility of the Office of Research’s multicampus research funds. The current situation of an essentially fixed multicampus research budget impacts the University’s ability to create and fund new multicampus research opportunities. The “lost opportunity” costs are large.

The MRU Joint Workgroup charge (Appendix C on website) was to develop a plan for MRUs that:
• Invigorates and strengthens the multicampus research portfolio within the University of California system;
• Helps UC achieve and maintain excellence in research at the boundaries of current knowledge and between disciplines;
• Increases UC’s responsiveness to emerging collaborative research opportunities and initiatives that fit into its long-range planning strategies; and
• Works to increase financial resources for multicampus research.

The Workgroup met twice in 2006 to discuss these issues and respond to a set of specific questions, and to make recommendations to the Vice Provost of Research on how best to implement the goals outlined above and below.

The overarching recommendation of the workgroup is:

• WE RECOMMEND that the Office of Research introduce greater flexibility into the provision of multicampus research funding to allow new opportunities to emerge on a competitive basis.

MRU Taxonomy and Nomenclature

• WE RECOMMEND the creation of an updated MRU taxonomy that reflects the types of multicampus initiatives: Multicampus Research Programs, Systemwide Networks, Systemwide Grants Programs and Systemwide Research Facilities.

• WE RECOMMEND that the Senate and Office of Research work together to modify the ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CONCERNING ORGANIZED RESEARCH UNITS (i.e. the Compendium) to clarify MRU nomenclature and taxonomy, and revise establishment guidelines and review criteria to reflect the differences in MRU types and functions.

This recommended taxonomy is not meant to reduce or eliminate creativity in the creation of multicampus research efforts, but to reduce the confusion as to MRU status. A sufficiently justified “new” structure should not be hampered by the taxonomy.

To be considered an MRU, at least three campuses must be involved in the research. The contributions of the MRU to UC research must be demonstrably greater than would have been possible by an organized group of faculty on a single campus. Collaboration must be evident and meaningful. The MRU must provide real and measurable value-added above and beyond campus-based research and should have an impact on research and teaching that results from the contributions and collaboration of scholars from across the UC system. Sustainability should be addressed as a core feature of the strategic plan developed by the MRU. The expectation is that an MRU will not be centrally funded in perpetuity nor will its existence be considered an entitlement for central funding. All current MRUs will be included in this paradigm.
SYSTEMWIDE NETWORKS: In general, an MRU should not be simply a cluster of loosely connected ORUs. The scholarly impact of an MRU must be demonstrably greater than that of a cluster of ORUs. A systemwide network of campus based ORUs (or Centers, Institutes, etc.) can apply for status as a UC Systemwide Network (e.g. the UC Cancer Center Alliance, Consortium of UC Energy and the Environment Centers). Such Networks would be eligible for modest contributions of funding from the Office of Research, matched by contributions from campuses, to assist in coordination of Network activities, establishment of a web page, etc.

SYSTEMWIDE GRANTS PROGRAMS: Grants programs should include an appropriate mix of single investigator and collaborative/multicampus awards. Grants competitions should be open to Senate faculty, graduate students, post doctoral fellows and non-Senate professional researchers. In order for a grants program to be considered a Systemwide Grants Program, a significant percentage of the grants should address an annual, focused theme designed to have a UC-wide impact on the scholarly area and lead to an outcome such as a published volume or conference. Graduate student and postdoctoral fellow research should be highlighted in these conferences and volumes. Some percentage of grants may continue to be awarded via a general (i.e. non-themed) call.

In some cases, a multicampus research effort may consist of a systemwide grants program as a component of (or managed by) a multicampus research program or systemwide facility. Themes will be developed by the individual MRU Advisory Committees in consultation with the Advisory Board on Multicampus Research (see below), relevant deans throughout the UC system, and UCORP.

Many grants programs may be, or will continue to be, centrally managed at the UC Office of Research to reduce administrative costs and duplication. The Office of Research would provide the administrative apparatus, while the scholarly leadership would be provided by a faculty committee. Programs such as the UC Marine Council, Pacific Rim Research Program, MICRO, Labor Fund and Presidential Humanities Fellowships are currently managed by the Office of Research. These may be good models for future grants programs.

SYSTEMWIDE FACILITIES: The Workgroup believes that there is a strong rationale for supporting major systemwide facilities or, more broadly, systemwide research infrastructure. However, we recognize that there are important long-term management issues associated with facilities.

- **WE RECOMMEND** that the Vice Provost convene a group to examine the status of facilities and address such issues as maintenance, expansion, management, business plans, relocation within UC, divestment, and investment in new facilities.
MRU Management

- **WE RECOMMEND** that the Vice Provost for Research appoint an Advisory Board on Multicampus Research, responsible for examining the MRU portfolio on an annual basis to ensure that UC’s research investments are deployed, via a competitive process, in the most effective manner.

The Board, consisting of members of the Senate Compendium committees (UCORP, UCPB, CCGA), representation from the Vice Chancellors for Research and academic deans, as well as faculty at large, will commission ad hoc sub-groups to assist in reviews, provide disciplinary perspectives, and address other specific issues. The Board will play an essential role in examining the state of the current MRU portfolio and assessing the quality of new MRU proposals.

The Board should be constructed in such a way as to assure that it can provide a breadth of disciplinary expertise in advising the Vice Provost. The Board will meet at least twice annually to undertake a comprehensive, comparative analysis of multicampus research units.

MRU Reviews and Funding

- **WE RECOMMEND** that, in general, financial commitments to MRUs from the UC Office of Research be for up to five years.

This recommendation should not be interpreted to mean that MRUs should cease to exist after five years, only that there should be no guarantee or expectation of UC Office of Research funding in perpetuity. It is expected that MRUs that continue to do quality scholarship should/could be supported by campus and/or extramural funding.

The Workgroup is in unanimous agreement that faculty FTE should not be supported by MRU funds. That responsibility belongs to the campuses. UC Office of Research funding may be used for “release time” to faculty engaged in MRU activities; however, the support of permanently allocated I&R FTE is an inappropriate use of central funding.

- **WE RECOMMEND** that systemwide funding for continuing FTEs be decreased by 20% a year for five years, at which time the campuses will have total responsibility for funding the FTEs.

- **WE RECOMMEND** that current funding for any FTEs that are vacated over the next five years will immediately be returned to the multicampus research funds in the Office of Research.

As existing MRUs are considered for continued UC Office of Research funding, they will be competing with new multicampus research proposals. The continuation of UC Office of Research funding for the MRU should be determined by measuring the value-added and impact of the MRU and its research agenda to the field and to UC scholarship.
• **WE RECOMMEND** that the Vice Provost implement a process to introduce greater flexible use of the current MRU funds and work toward augmenting the multicampus budget.

• **WE RECOMMEND** that until a review/redistribution process is in place, the Vice Provost for Research should use the funds made available from the disestablishment of the California Space Institute (CalSpace) MRU and a one-time 2.5% cut to existing MRUs, to seed new multicampus efforts.

Funds will be provided to potential or nascent MRU teams for planning meetings, workshops and other vehicles to facilitate subsequent competition for longer-term funding. In addition, the funds may be used to establish new MRUs following systemwide calls for proposals.

The Vice Provost for Research will seek additional funds from the President and Provost and, within the annual Regents’ budget process, work to augment the multicampus research budget, both in general and for special initiatives.

An MRU’s proposal for continuation should focus on the unit’s success at achieving its strategic plan. MRU directors will be asked to respond to directed inquiries concerning strategic plans, sustainability, the impact, uniqueness and prestige of the research, effectiveness in maintaining the multicampus nature of the MRU, campus in-kind support and funding commitments, illustrations of demonstrable collaboration, and such annual outputs as conferences, symposia, monographs, published volumes, extramural funding, and graduate student sponsorship.

In addition to the key metrics of value added and impact on scholarship, proposals for the establishment of new MRUs and the continuation of existing MRUs will include recommended discipline and MRU-type specific metrics. Evaluation of the suitability and quality of these metrics will be one criterion for UC Office of Research funding.

• **WE RECOMMEND** that the Advisory Board on Multicampus Research be asked to propose a mechanism to recover, over the next five years, at least 10% annually from the current total MRU budget to use for funding new programs or augmenting existing ones.

The Vice Provost, in consultation with the Board and the Senate, will establish a process to “phase out” standing UC Office of Research funding of existing MRUs. The funds thus captured will be used to fund new multicampus research opportunities as well as, in some instances, fund or augment the budgets of existing MRUs. Existing MRUs will be eligible to compete for these funds and their proposals will be reviewed along with those for new MRUs using the criteria above. Requests for systemwide MRU funding will require matching campus funds as evidence of the campuses’ commitments to the proposed MRU and its involved faculty.
The MRU host campus will continue to be expected to provide “in kind” support, such as space, personnel and the usual campus support functions (HR, accounting, access to facilities, etc.). Our existing process of MRU site competition and execution of an MOU between the host campus and the UC Office of Research will continue. New and existing MRUs will be strongly encouraged to seek extramural funding. As noted below, the UC Office of Research will assist, as it is able, in attracting such support.

The Role of the UC Office of Research

The role of UCOP, and in particular the UC Office of Research, is to create and fund new multicampus research opportunities that provide value-added to faculty efforts.

- **WE RECOMMEND** that the Office of Research, in collaboration with External Relations and the Budget Office, continue to play a key role in advocating for state research funding in general.

- **WE RECOMMEND** that the Office of Research continue to work with the campus Vice Chancellors for Research in advancing Research Initiatives for the Regents’ Budget.

The Office of Research will continue to provide support to convene faculty who wish to explore multicampus collaborations and pursue funding. In consultation with campus Vice Chancellors for Research, faculty will be made aware of these new opportunities for collaboration. The Office of Research Directors for Multicampus Research will visit campuses and work with faculty to encourage new ideas and participation. The Office of Research will work with the campuses, coordinating as needed, on the response to major national and state research competitive opportunities.

In consultation with the campus Vice Chancellors for External Relations, the UC Office of Research will work with faculty groups and MRUs to identify new sources of support and, without interfering with other campus efforts, to fundraise. The Office of Research will contribute toward funding grant writers/development officers or other development efforts, either directly to the MRU or by assisting in the coordination of larger-scale grants efforts.